

# SWAP NEWS

## Montana Source Water Assessment Program Update



### UPDATE ON EPA REVIEW OF MONTANA SWAP

Formal comments from EPA regarding the Source Water Assessment Program were received by DEQ in early August. EPA requested clarification on several issues but none of the comments required significant modifications of the program document. Several sections were edited to improve clarity and the final document is being submitted to EPA as you read this newsletter. We anticipate full approval before EPA's November deadline.

The SWAP Advisory Council will meet in Helena on October 21 to discuss the final document DEQ submitted to EPA. Members will attend in person or by conference call and are asked to RSVP. Those who have comments on the final program can contact any of the advisory council members listed at the end of this newsletter.

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### BILLINGS AND YELLOWSTONE COUNTY PUBLIC WATER SYSTEMS

The City of Billings is currently embarking on a regional assessment of water quality in Yellowstone County and other parts of the Middle Yellowstone River Watershed Area. The Source Water

Protection section at DEQ is supporting this activity by providing assistance in developing a map-based approach intended to help identify the location of all Public Water Systems (PWSs) in the assessment area. The location of the PWSs have been assembled into a map overlay sheet, also called a GIS coverage, which will allow a comparison of the location of the PWSs to the location of potential sources for surface or ground water contamination. These potential contaminant sources include land use activities or sites such as underground storage tanks, landfills, mining areas, and state and federal hazardous waste sites.

Several methods of managing a water quality assessment program on a regional scale are currently being evaluated. An important aspect of this effort will be the ability to develop and implement Source Water Protection Plans for participating PWSs. A Local Water Quality District (LWQD) could be a mechanism to provide continuous monitoring of surface and ground water quality in the watershed region. Establishing a formal LWQD would enable participants to be eligible for state and/or federal grant funding sources to support their activities. While LWQDs are wholly a local effort, area residents may not support establishing another formal government entity. An informal management method may be to develop a regional watershed management group that can monitor surface and ground water quality. The informal approach has limited outside funding opportunities, and

may not be able to meet the objectives needed to support protection of regional PWSs.

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### EPA REGION 8 STATES ACTIVITIES

Joe Meek represented Montana at the annual Groundwater / UIC / SWAP meeting between EPA and EPA Region 8 states in Moab, Utah from August 3<sup>rd</sup> through 5<sup>th</sup>. The meeting provided states and EPA Region 8 staff an opportunity to discuss issues face-to-face.

A Source Water Protection Workshop was held in Denver in August. The workshop provided an opportunity to learn about Source Water Assessment and geographic information systems. Montana was well represented by folks eager to learn the finer details about source water protection. DEQ sent one staff member, as did several other federal and local agencies. At least one non-profit technical service provider was also represented. Unfortunately, certain portions of the training event did not quite live up to expectations. Attendees generally indicated that their interactions with others generated the most beneficial information exchange.

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### MRWS FORUM ON SOURCE WATER PROTECTION

Bill O'Connell of Montana

Rural Water Systems lead a forum for DEQ and EPA staff to identify critical wellhead and groundwater protection needs. MRWS contract with EPA calls for groundwater technicians to devote 75 hours to issues identified at this annual forum. The purpose of this requirement is to foster communication and coordination between everyone working in wellhead or source water protection.

Staff from DEQ Source Water Protection and Public Water Supply sections, Montana Bureau of Mines and Geology, Montana office of EPA, and Region 8 office of EPA attended the MRWS forum. DEQ staff identified priority setting and concurrence with the new Montana Source Water Protection Program as important issues. MRWS currently prioritizes water systems for assistance based on first come first served. DEQ suggested they consider health risk and aquifer sensitivity when setting priorities. The susceptibility assessment requirement of SWAP was agreed to be the most significant change MRWS needs to address.



### **EPA AWARDS GRANTS FOR SOURCE WATER PROTECTION IN PRIORITY WATERSHEDS**

Two areas of Montana will benefit from EPA grants intended to foster coordination between source water protection and watershed protection planning efforts.

The Sage Creek County Water District received a grant to help them plant additional acres of alfalfa in order to reduce saline seep. Large-scale implementation of water quality protection practices such as these could help reduce treatment costs to downstream water

users.

The Bitterroot Valley communities of Hamilton, Darby, and Stevensville will receive a grant to help them develop source water protection plans. This project is intended to help show that communities in areas with similar hydrologic, economic, and social conditions can reduce the cost of developing source water protection plans by joining forces.



### **TECH TIPS**

Do you have trouble finding publications on water resources in Montana? Try <http://mt.water.usgs.gov/pub/Biblio.html> for U.S. Geological Survey reports. For Montana Bureau of Mines and Geology reports try <http://mbmgsun.mtech.edu/catindx.htm>.



### **TRAINING OPPORTUNITY – CONTINUING EDUCATION FOR PROFESSIONALS**

The MSU Extension Service, Montana Water Center, and DEQ are offering an intensive, hands-on workshop to familiarize professionals with the source water assessment and protection planning process. The workshop is designed for engineers, local planners, and others who deal with the infrastructure of public water supplies. The class, scheduled for November 2, 1999 at MSU in Bozeman, will use the new CD-ROM *Source Water Protection* training module. Contact Gretchen Rupp at 994-1748.



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